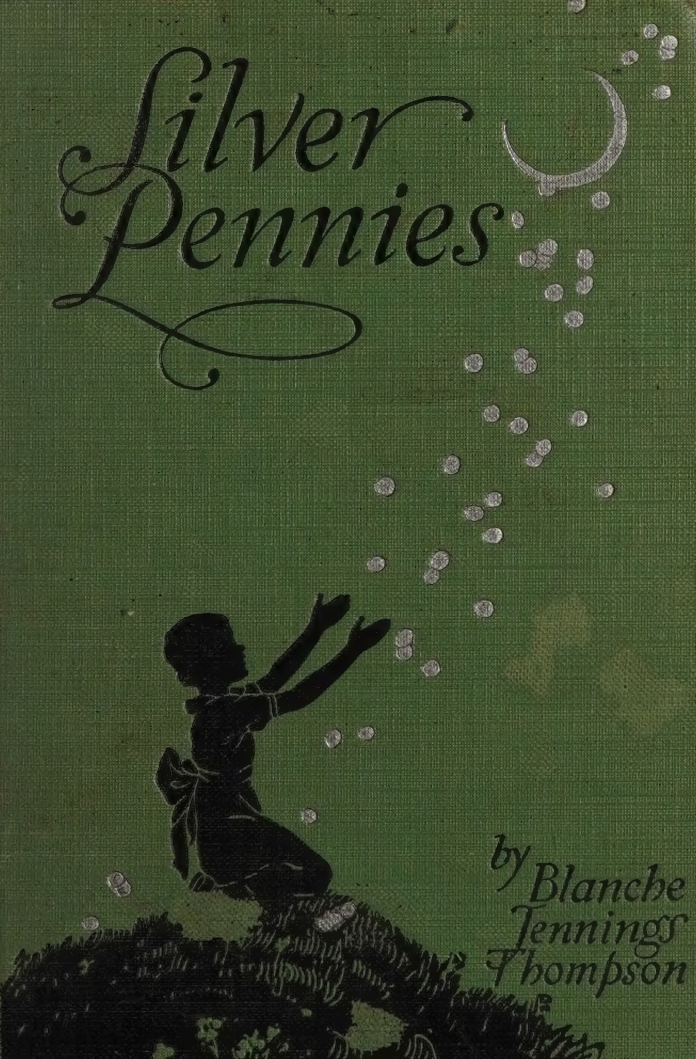
Silver Pennies



by Blanche Jennings Thompson

You must have a silver penny
To get into Fairyland.

I CANNOT SEE FAIRIES,
I DREAM THEM. — *Page four.*

SILVER PENNIES

A Collection of Modern Poems for Boys and Girls

By

BLANCHE JENNINGS THOMPSON

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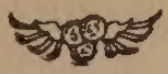

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TO

THE MEMORY OF

MY MOTHER AND FATHER

PREFACE

You must have a silver penny
To get into Fairyland.

But silver pennies are hard to find, and it isn't everyone who knows where to look for them, even if he has the time; so it is for such people, the mothers and the teachers who want silver pennies for their children and do not know where to find them, that this volume is prepared, as well as for the children themselves.

Here, then, are your silver pennies, but be careful how you handle them, I pray you—their lustre is easily dimmed. As I have written elsewhere and quote here because I cannot say it any better, "If a poem is worthy at all, it isn't tough—it is frail and exquisite, a mood, a moment of sudden understanding, a cobweb which falls apart at a clumsy touch."

Most poems are better understood by being read aloud intelligently, in a low-pitched sympathetic voice, untouched by sing-song. They should be phrased as in music, according to the meaning, still preserving the rhythm and music

of the lines. Some poems, notably those of Vachel Lindsay, should be chanted or intoned. "The Potatoes' Dance" and "The Mysterious Cat," for instance, having no reflective, slow-moving lyric quality such as is present in "The Lake Isle of Innisfree," by Yeats, should be chanted with strongly marked rhythm and no trace of "elocution." Would there were no such thing as elocution as that word is commonly interpreted! It is fatal to any poem. A simple, sincere, and unaffected reading is the best tribute that can be paid to the poet's work.

Children in a class should not all learn the same poem, nor yet poems which have no appeal for them. Moreover, no poem should ever be memorized a line at a time or even a stanza at a time. The child should see it and hear it, and, in the case of older children, write it until it is stored in his memory in a natural and unmechanical manner. Teach him to remember the sequence or pattern of a poem, and the words will slip into place as do the colors in a kaleidoscope.

The quickest way to kill any possible interest in a poem is to say, "To-day we are going to learn a poem named 'Barter' by Sara Teasdale.

You may all sit up straight in your seats and listen." Rather, establish a mood by music, a picture, a story, another poem perhaps, or sometimes just skillful questions leading up to the thought in the poem to be read. Then be sure to take time at the end of the reading for an *interesting* discussion, a finding of sound words and color words and movement words, singing lines and bits that one could paint—*never*, "What is the meaning of the second word in line 4?" or "What should we learn from this poem, children?"

Many poems in this volume are not intended to be memorized by children at all. They should be read by the teacher, talked about perhaps, or, as in the case of Josephine Daskam Bacon's "A Sleepy Song," merely read to quiet the children after a noisy period or as a bedtime poem by the mother. It would be a very unwise choice for reproduction. More than half of the poems herein contained have, in my experience, been heard and enjoyed by children of ten and under—those of the first four grades. These poems are found in Part I. The others are more suitable for older children, from ten to twelve or older—those in the fifth and sixth

grades or even in junior high school. There are however, in Part I, many poems with an appeal so general that they can be used effectively with children as young as two years, while they are equally enjoyed by adults. Poems of this type include "Moon Folly," by Fannie Stearns Davis; "Mockery," by Katherine Riggs; "Overheard on a Saltmarsh," by Harold Monroe; "The Potatoes' Dance," and "The Mysterious Cat," by Vachel Lindsay; "Check," by James Stephens; "The First Day of April," by Mary Carolyn Davies; and others of a similarly tuneful nature.

The average teacher is just beginning to discover the vast unmined tract of modern poetry for children. For her sake, particularly, I have made, in this book, an effort to gather as representative a collection as possible from the field of comparatively recent poetry, from the point of view of appeal to children; and, if great names be omitted, it is because no poem was found which seemed to fulfill this requirement. The word *comparatively* is the loophole through which I have secured entrance for Emily Dickinson's "I Never Saw a Moor," although the beauty of the poem and its appeal to children would seem sufficient justification for its inclusion.

It is my hope, then, that because of this little volume, no child will be kept out of the fairyland of modern poetry for the lack of a silver penny.

BLANCHE JENNINGS THOMPSON.

Rochester, New York,
April, 1925.

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PART ONE

I LOOKED TO LEFT AND RIGHT

Some One

If you should hear a tiny little knock at your door, what would you think it might be? I wonder who was knocking at this little boy's door. It seems like fairies, doesn't it?

SOME one came knocking
At my wee, small door;
Some one came knocking,
I'm sure — sure — sure;
I listened, I opened,
I looked to left and right,
But nought there was a-stirring
In the still dark night;
Only the busy beetle
Tap-tapping in the wall,
Only from the forest
The screech-owl's call,
Only the cricket whistling
While the dewdrops fall,
So I know not who came knocking,
At all, at all, at all.

Walter de la Mare

Have You Watched the Fairies?

Here is another little story about some of the things the fairies do. Perhaps, if you watch very closely, you will see as much as this child saw.

HAVE you watched the fairies when the rain is done
Spreading out their little wings to dry them in the sun?
I have, I have! Isn't it fun?

Have you heard the fairies all among the limes
Singing little fairy tunes to little fairy rhymes?
I have, I have, lots and lots of times!

Have you seen the fairies dancing in the air,
And dashing off behind the stars to tidy up their hair?
I have, I have; I've been there!

Rose Fyleman

The Little Elf

What do you think this little elf-man looked like? Do you suppose you could paint a picture of him talking to the big grown-up person?

I MET a little Elf-man, once,
Down where the lilies blow.
I asked him why he was so small,
And why he didn't grow.

He slightly frowned, and with his eye
He looked me through and through.
"I'm quite as big for me," said he,
"As you are big for you."

John Kendrick Bangs

Fairies

This poem was written by a little girl only six years old. Do you think you could write one as good?

I CANNOT see fairies,
I dream them.
There is no fairy can hide from me;
I keep on dreaming till I find him:
There you are, Primrose! — I see you,
Black Wing!

Hilda Conkling

The Fairies Have Never a Penny to Spend

Here is another lovely poem about fairies. Notice what a singing rhythm it has and in what unexpected places the rhymes come.

THE fairies have never a penny to spend,
They haven't a thing put by;
But theirs is the dower of bird and of flower,
And theirs are the earth and the sky.

And though you should live in a palace of gold
Or sleep in a dried-up ditch,
You could never be poor as the fairies are,
And never as rich.

Since ever and ever the world began
They have danced like a ribbon of flame,
They have sung their song through the centuries long,
And yet it is never the same.
And though you be foolish or though you be wise,
With hair of silver or gold,
You could never be young as the fairies are,
And never as old.

Rose Fyleman

The Child Next Door

Did you ever know a little girl like "the child next door"? Don't you feel very sorry for her? I think that we would rather play with Mary. Be sure to pronounce the name of the little girl correctly. Joan is spoken all in one syllable — to rhyme with "own."

THE child next door has a wreath on her hat;
Her afternoon frock sticks out like that,
All soft and frilly;
She doesn't believe in fairies at all
(She told me over the garden wall)—
She thinks they're silly.

The child next door has a watch of her own;
She has shiny hair and her name is Joan;
(Mine's only Mary).
But doesn't it seem very sad to you
To think that she never her whole life through
Has seen a fairy?

Rose Fyleman

The Elf and the Dormouse

Did you ever wonder who first thought of making umbrellas? Well, this is the story.

UNDER a toadstool crept a wee Elf,
Out of the rain to shelter himself.

Under the toadstool, sound asleep,
Sat a big Dormouse all in a heap.

Trembled the wee Elf, frightened, and yet
Fearing to fly away lest he get wet.

To the next shelter — maybe a mile!
Sudden the wee Elf smiled a wee smile,

Tugged till the toadstool toppled in two.
Holding it over him, gaily he flew.

Soon he was safe home, dry as could be.
Soon woke the Dormouse — "Good gracious me!

"Where is my toadstool?" loud he lamented.
— And that's how umbrellas first were invented.

Oliver Herford

The Find

Do you ever play that you are an elf in a fairy ring or try to play fairy tunes on a hollow reed? It was a little Irish boy who played the game in this poem. Do you know any bird who names himself when he sings?

I TOOK a reed and blew a tune,
And sweet it was and very clear
To be about a little thing
That only few hold dear.

Three times the cuckoo named himself,
But nothing heard him on the hill,
Where I was piping like an elf;
The air was very still.

'Twas all about a little thing
I made a mystery of sound;
I found it in a fairy ring
Upon a fairy mound.

Francis Ledwidge

The Shadow People

Here is some more fairy music such as we heard in "The Find." Why do you suppose old lame Bridget does not hear it? The line about the "mushroom's parasol" reminds us of "The Elf and the Dormouse."

OLD lame Bridget doesn't hear
Fairy music in the grass
When the gloaming's on the mere
And the shadow people pass:
Never hears their slow grey feet
Coming from the village street
Just beyond the parson's wall,
Where the clover globes are sweet
And the mushroom's parasol
Opens in the moonlit rain.
Every night I hear them call
From their long and merry train.

Old lame Bridget says to me,
"It is just your fancy, child."

She cannot believe I see
Laughing faces in the wild,
Hands that twinkle in the sedge
Bowing at the water's edge
Where the finny minnows quiver,
Shaping on a blue wave's ledge
Bubble foam to sail the river.
And the sunny hands to me
Beckon ever, beckon ever.
Oh! I would be wild and free
And with the shadow people be.

Francis Ledwidge

Overheard on a Saltmarsh

Listen to this queer little conversation between a nymph and a goblin. How do you think they look? Can you read it so that we can tell which one is speaking? What do you think the goblin wished to do with the beads?

NYMPH, nymph, what are your beads?

Green glass, goblin. Why do you stare at them?

Give them me.

No.

Give them me. Give them me.

No.

Then I will howl all night in the reeds,
Lie in the mud and howl for them.

Goblin, why do you love them so?

They are better than stars or water,
Better than voices of winds that sing,
Better than any man's fair daughter,
Your green glass beads on a silver ring.

Hush, I stole them out of the moon.

Give me your beads, I desire them.

No.

I will howl in a deep lagoon
For your green glass beads, I love them so.
Give them me. Give them.

No.

Harold Monro

For a Child Named Katherine

When we go to bed at night, we like to feel that some one is taking care of us who is nearer even than Mother, who may be in the next room. This little girl named Katherine used to wonder every night whether God would come to visit her in her dreams or send some of His good fairies.

GOD and the Fairies, be true, be true!
I am the child who waits for you.

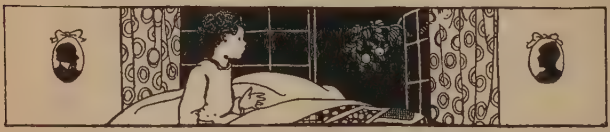
I wait for God as I go to sleep.
I stretch out my hand for His hand to keep.
I look for Fairies where grass is deep,
And once where I heard a bell on the sheep.
The Saint who comes at Christmas-time
Is someway not so much all mine.
He surely comes, for Christmas Day,
But I never ask that Saint to stay.
He brings me beautiful things to keep,
But I liked the best the bell on the sheep.
God and the Fairies I cannot see
Are the ones that I want to stay with me.

They always stay with me through the night,
But they go just before the room is light.
It is always just God, or just Fairies, who stay,
But I never know which, nor which is away.
But once I awoke when it was dark

And something made me hush and hark.
My hand which I'd left outside the sheet
Was tucked very gently under my cheek
So I knew it was God who stayed that night —
And then I slept till it was light,
And when my hand stays out on the bed
I guess the Fairies are there instead.

I think the Fairies bring the dreams
And when I wake and my room seems
Very strange, because I've played
All the night in a woodsy glade
In my dreaming, then I know
Fairy folk have made it so —
Fairy folk who slide, they say,
Into the house on a thin moon's ray.
But always something has been there,
To fill my room with Day and air
To make one feel so sweet and wise
Before I open up my eyes.
But sometimes when it's bright and Day,
I feel alone and I must pray.
I am sure then and yet I say,
"God and the Fairies, be true, be true!
I am the child who waits for you."

Louise Townsend Nicholl



Night Magic

(A Lie-awake Song)

Things never seem quite the same at night, do they? Can you think of some other things that surprise you in the dark which the little boy in the poem has not told about?

THE apples falling from the tree
Make such a heavy bump at night
I always am surprised to see
They are so little, when it's light;

And all the dark just sings and sings
So loud, I cannot see at all
How frogs and crickets and such things
That make the noise, can be so small.

Then my own room looks larger, too —
Corners so dark and far away —
I wonder if things really do
Grow up at night and shrink by day?

For I dream sometimes, just as clear,
I'm bigger than the biggest men —
Then mother says, "Wake up, my dear!"
And I'm a little boy again.

Amelia Josephine Burr

Moon Song

Here is another poem written by the little girl who wrote "Fairies." Which moon does this make you think of — the full moon, the half-moon, or the crescent? What line tells you which it is?

THERE is a star that runs very fast,
That goes pulling the moon
Through the tops of the poplars.
It is all in silver,
The tall star;
The moon rolls goldenly along
Out of breath.
Mr. Moon, does he make you hurry?

Hilda Conkling

The Moon's the North Wind's Cooky

(What the Little Girl Said)

When does the moon look like a cooky with a big bite out of it? I wonder who eats the moon-scraps.

THE Moon's the North Wind's cooky.
He bites it, day by day,
Until there's but a rim of scraps
That crumble all away.

The South Wind is a baker.
He kneads clouds in his den,
And bakes a crisp new moon *that . . . greedy North . . . Wind . . . eats . . . again!*

Vachel Lindsay

Mockery

Here is a poem that is easy to learn. It sounds just like a song, doesn't it? Have you ever noticed that the flowers smell sweeter at night? Did the moon ever play a joke like this on you?

HAPPENED that the moon was up before I went to bed,
Poking through the bramble-trees her round, gold head.
I didn't stop for stocking,
I didn't stop for shoe,
But went running out to meet her — oh, the night was blue!

Barefoot down the hill road, dust beneath my toes;
Barefoot in the pasture smelling sweet of fern and rose!
Oh, night was running with me,
Tame folk were all in bed —
And the moon was just showing her wild gold head.

But before I reached the hilltop where the bramble-trees are tall,
I looked to see my lady moon — she wasn't there at all! —
Not sitting on the hilltop,
Nor slipping through the air,
Nor hanging in the brambles by her bright gold hair!

I walked slowly down the pasture and slowly up the hill,
Wondering and wondering, and very, very still.
I wouldn't look behind me,
I went at once to bed —
And poking through the window was her bold gold head!

Katherine Dixon Riggs

Yet Gentle Will the Griffin Be

(What Grandpa Told the Children)

A griffin is a strange creature that we read about in fairy tales. Can you imagine one drinking milk out of the Milky Way?

THE moon? It is a griffin's egg,
Hatching to-morrow night.
And how the little boys will watch
With shouting and delight
To see him break the shell and stretch
And creep across the sky.
The boys will laugh. The little girls,
I fear, may hide and cry.
Yet gentle will the griffin be,
Most decorous and fat,
And walk up to the Milky Way
And lap it like a cat.

Vachel Lindsay

Moon Folly

(A Song of Conn the Fool)

Conn the Fool was a queer sort of person. People thought he was crazy, but he had lovely thoughts, hadn't he? Do you suppose that he ever had a wonderful white moon-tree growing beside his door?

I WILL go up the mountain after the Moon;
She is caught in a dead fir-tree.
Like a great pale apple of silver and pearl,
Like a great pale apple is she.

I will leap and will catch her with quick cold hands
And carry her home in my sack.
I will set her down safe on the oaken bench
That stands at the chimney-back.

And then I will sit by the fire all night,
And sit by the fire all day.
I will gnaw at the Moon to my heart's delight
Till I gnaw her slowly away.

And while I go mad with the Moon's cold taste
The World will beat at my door,
Crying, "Come out!" and crying, "Make haste,
And give us the Moon once more!"

But I shall not answer them ever at all.
I shall laugh, as I count and hide
The great, black, beautiful Seeds of the Moon
In a flower-pot deep and wide.

Then I shall lie down and go fast asleep,
Drunken with flame and aswoon.
But the seeds will sprout and the seeds will leap,
The subtle swift seeds of the Moon.

And some day, all of the World that cries
And beats at my door shall see
A thousand moon-leaves spring from my thatch
On a wonderful white Moon-tree!

Then each shall have Moons to his heart's desire:
Apples of silver and pearl;
Apples of orange and copper fire
Setting his five wits aswirl!

And then they will thank me, who mock me now,
"Wanting the Moon is he," —
Oh, I'm off to the mountain after the Moon,
Ere she falls from the dead fir-tree!

Fannie Stearns Davis

Stars

A night full of stars is a wonderful thing. Can you shut your eyes as you listen to the poem and see the stately procession passing "up the dome of heaven"? There is no sound — only scent and starshine and stillness. Do you know the names of any of the stars or constellations? Which ones are topaz and which misty red?

ALONE in the night
On a dark hill
With pines around me
Spicy and still,

And a heaven full of stars
Over my head,
White and topaz
And misty red;

Myriads with beating
  Hearts of fire
That æons
  Cannot vex or tire;

Up the dome of heaven
  Like a great hill,
I watch them marching
  Stately and still,

And I know that I
  Am honored to be
Witness
  Of so much majesty.

Sara Teasdale

Evening Song

Shut your eyes and try to say this lullaby to yourself. Can you make up a little slow tune for it in your mind — one that would put the orioles to sleep in their "gypsy nest"?

LITTLE Child, Good Child, go to sleep.
The tree-toads purr and the peepers peep;
Under the apple-tree grass grows deep;
Little Child, Good Child, go to sleep!

Big star out in the orange west;
Orioles swung in their gypsy nest;
Soft wind singing what you love best;
Rest till the sun-rise; rest, Child, rest!

Swift dreams swarm in a silver flight. —
Hand in hand with the sleepy Night
Lie down soft with your eyelids tight. —
Hush, Child, little Child! Hush. — Good-night. —

Fannie Stearns Davis

The Sleepy Song

This would be a very good poem to use if you were trying to put baby brother or sister to sleep. It is rather difficult to learn because the stanzas are so much alike. It makes one sleepy just to read it.

As soon as the fire burns red and low,
And the house up-stairs is still,
She sings me a queer little sleepy song,
Of sheep that go over a hill.

The good little sheep run quick and soft,
Their colors are gray and white:
They follow their leader nose to tail,
For they must be home by night.

And one slips over and one comes next,
And one runs after behind,
The gray one's nose at the white one's tail,
The top of the hill they find.

And when they get to the top of the hill
They quietly slip away,
But one runs over and one comes next —
Their colors are white and gray.

And over they go, and over they go,
And over the top of the hill,
The good little sheep run quick and soft,
And the house up-stairs is still.

And one slips over and one comes next,
The good little, gray little sheep!
I watch how the fire burns red and low,
And she says that I fall asleep.

Josephine Daskam Bacon

Baby Seed Song

Do you ever wonder what the baby seeds say to each other far down under the ground and if they know who their neighbors are?

LITTLE brown brother, oh! little brown brother,
Are you awake in the dark?
Here we lie cosily, close to each other:
Hark to the song of the lark —
"Waken!" the lark says, "waken and dress you;
Put on your green coats and gay,
Blue sky will shine on you, sunshine caress you —
Waken! 'tis morning — 'tis May!"

Little brown brother, oh! little brown brother,
What kind of a flower will you be?
I'll be a poppy — all white, like my mother;
Do be a poppy like me.
What! You're a sunflower! How I shall miss you
When you're grown golden and high!
But I shall send all the bees up to kiss you;
Little brown brother, good-bye.

E. Nesbit

Rain in the Night

This little child is going to have a good time after the rain. Can you read the poem so that it sounds "sometimes loud, sometimes soft, just like a song"?

RAINING, raining,
All night long;
Sometimes loud, sometimes soft,
Just like a song.

There'll be rivers in the gutters
And lakes along the street.
It will make our lazy kitty
Wash his little dirty feet.

The roses will wear diamonds
Like kings and queens at court;
But the pansies all get muddy
Because they are so short.

I'll sail my boat to-morrow
In wonderful new places,
But first I'll take my watering-pot
And wash the pansies' faces.

Amelia Josephine Burr

The Old Bridge

Hilda, the little-girl poet, was older when she wrote this poem. She used to tell her poems to her mother, who wrote them down for her. Now she is big enough to write them herself.

THE old bridge has a wrinkled face.
He bends his back
For us to go over.
He moans and weeps
But we do not hear.
Sorrow stands in his face
For the heavy weight and worry
Of people passing.
The trees drop their leaves into the water;
The sky nods to him.

The leaves float down like small ships
On the blue surface
Which is the sky.
He is not always sad;
He smiles to see the ships go down
And the little children
Playing on the river banks.

Hilda Conkling

The Day before April

When winter is over and the first signs of spring appear, most of us feel like going out into the woods and singing just to show how happy we are. This bit of verse expresses that feeling.

THE day before April
Alone, alone,
I walked in the woods
And sat on a stone.

I sat on a broad stone
And sang to the birds.
The tune was God's making
But I made the words.

Mary Carolyn Davies

The Pasture

Wouldn't you like to go out to the pasture too and help clean the spring and see the little baby calf?

I'M going out to clean the pasture spring;
I'll only stop to rake the leaves away
(And wait to watch the water clear, I may):
I sha'n't be gone long. — You come too.

I'm going out to fetch the little calf
That's standing by the mother. It's so young
It totters when she licks it with her tongue.
I sha'n't be gone long. — You come too.

Robert Frost

I Meant to Do My Work To-day

What time of year does this poem tell about? How do we usually feel in the spring? The poet must have felt just as we do when we begin to get very tired of school and long for vacation.

I MEANT to do my work to-day —
But a brown bird sang in the apple-tree,
And a butterfly flitted across the field,
And all the leaves were calling me.

And the wind went sighing over the land,
Tossing the grasses to and fro,
And a rainbow held out its shining hand —
So what could I do but laugh and go?

Richard Le Gallienne

Fringed Gentians

Have you ever seen fringed gentians? They are shy flowers, a beautiful blue in color, and they fade very quickly if you bring them into the house.

NEAR where I live there is a lake
As blue as blue can be; winds make
It dance as they go blowing by.
I think it curtseys to the sky.

It's just a lake of lovely flowers,
And my Mamma says they are ours;
But they are not like those we grow
To be our very own, you know.

We have a splendid garden, there
Are lots of flowers everywhere;
Roses, and pinks, and four o'clocks,
And hollyhocks, and evening stocks.

Mamma lets us pick them, but never
Must we pick any gentians — ever!
For if we carried them away
They'd die of homesickness that day.

Amy Lowell

Queen Anne's Lace

Do you know the pretty white flower called Queen Anne's Lace (it is really a weed) which grows along the roadside in the summer time? This is the tale of how it came there. Do you know any other name for Queen Anne's Lace?

QUEEN Anne, Queen Anne, has washed her lace
(She chose a summer's day)
And hung it in a grassy place
To whiten, if it may.

Queen Anne, Queen Anne, has left it there,
And slept the dewy night;
Then waked, to find the sunshine fair,
And all the meadows white.

Queen Anne, Queen Anne, is dead and gone
(She died a summer's day),
But left her lace to whiten on
Each weed-entangled way!

Mary Leslie Newton

The Hens

Have you ever watched hens go to bed? This poem is full of words which exactly describe the way hens sound when they are setiling down for the night. Which line do you like best? What do you think the hens are asking?

THE night was coming very fast;
It reached the gate as I ran past.

The pigeons had gone to the tower of the church
And all the hens were on their perch

Up in the barn, and I thought I heard
A piece of a little purring word.

I stopped inside, waiting and staying,
To try to hear what the hens were saying.

They were asking something, that was plain,
Asking it over and over again.

One of them moved and turned around,
Her feathers made a ruffled sound,

A ruffled sound, like a bushful of birds,
And she said her little asking words.

She pushed her head close into her wing,
But nothing answered anything.

Elizabeth Madox Roberts

Strange Tree

There are some kinds of trees which seem to us almost as if they were people. We feel like giving them names of their own. The apple tree seems particularly human. What kind of tree do you think this one was?

AWAY beyond the Jarboe house
I saw a different kind of tree.
Its trunk was old and large and bent,
And I could feel it look at me.

The road was going on and on
Beyond to reach some other place.
I saw a tree that looked at me,
And yet it did not have a face.

It looked at me with all its limbs;
It looked at me with all its bark.
The yellow wrinkles on its sides
Were bent and dark.

And then I ran to get away,
But when I stopped and turned to see,
The tree was bending to the side
And leaning out to look at me.

Elizabeth Madox Roberts

Water Noises

Does this poem make you think of any time when you have played by yourself beside the water? What do you think the water says?

WHEN I am playing by myself,
And all the boys are lost around,
Then I can hear the water go;
It makes a little talking sound.

Along the rocks below the tree,
I see it ripple up and wink;
And I can hear it saying on,
"And do you think? And do you think?"

A bug shoots by that snaps and ticks,
And a bird flies up beside the tree
To go into the sky to sing.
I hear it say, "Killdee, killdee!"

Or else a yellow cow comes down
To splash a while and have a drink.
But when she goes I still can hear
The water say, "And do you think?"

Elizabeth Madox Roberts

The Rivals

People use patterns to cut out dresses and sometimes a poet uses a pattern to "cut out" a poem. Can you find the pattern in this one? It sounds easy, but it is really rather difficult to make a poem like this one. Do you know why Mr. Stephens called it "The Rivals"?

I HEARD a bird at dawn
Singing sweetly on a tree,
That the dew was on the lawn,
And the wind was on the lea;
But I didn't listen to him,
For he didn't sing to me.

I didn't listen to him,
For he didn't sing to me
That the dew was on the lawn
And the wind was on the lea;
I was singing at the time
Just as prettily as he.

I was singing all the time,
Just as prettily as he,
About the dew upon the lawn
And the wind upon the lea;
So I didn't listen to him
As he sang upon a tree.

James Stephens

The Faithless Flowers

Here is a poem about a little girl who thinks that some of the flowers in her garden are very incorrectly named. Can you think of any other flowers that do not live up to their names?

I WENT this morning down to where the
Johnny-Jump-Ups grow
Like naughty purple faces nodding in a row.

I stayed 'most all the morning there — I sat
down on a stump
And watched and watched and watched them —
and they never gave a jump!

And Golden Glow that stands up tall and yellow
by the fence,
It doesn't glow a single bit — it's only just
pretence —
I ran down after tea last night to watch them
in the dark —
I had to light a match to see; they didn't give a
spark!

And then the Bouncing Bets don't bounce — I
tried them yesterday,
I picked a big pink bunch down in the meadow
where they stay,
I took a piece of string I had and tied them in a
ball,
And threw them down as hard as hard — they
never bounced at all!

And Tiger Lilies may look fierce, to meet them
all alone,
All tall and black and yellowy and nodding by
a stone,
But they're no more like tigers than the dog-
wood's like a dog,
Or bulrushes are like a bull or toadwort like a
frog!

I like the flowers very much — they're pleasant
as can be
For bunches on the table, and to pick and wear
and see,
But still it doesn't seem quite fair — it does
seem very queer —
They don't do what they're named for — not
at any time of year!

Margaret Widdemer

Little Folks in the Grass

Who are the little folks in the grass? Whose houses might we pull down, "roof and all," by stepping carelessly?

IN the grass
A thousand little people pass,
And all about a myriad little eyes look out,
For there are houses every side
Where the little folks abide,
Where the little folks take tea
On a grass blade near a tree;
Where they hold their Sabbath meetings,
Pass each other, giving greetings,
So remember when you pass

Through the grass;
Little folks are everywhere;
Walk quite softly, take great care
Lest you hurt them unaware,
Lest the giant that is YOU
Pull a house down with his shoe,
Pull a house down, roof and all,
Killing children, great and small;
So the wee eyes look at you
As you walk the meadows through;
So remember when you pass
Through the grass.

Annette Wynne

Parliament Hill

The little child who is speaking in this poem lives in far-off London town. What kind of work do you think his father does? Do you suppose the little boy takes his father's supper to him?

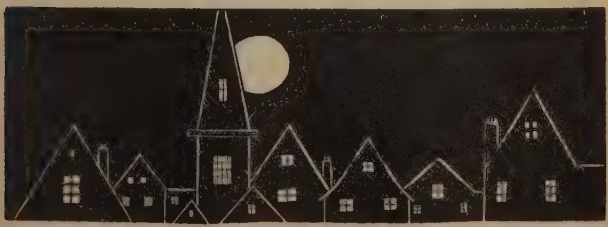
HAVE you seen the lights of London how
they twinkle, twinkle, twinkle,
Yellow lights, and silver lights, and crimson
lights, and blue?

And there among the other lights is Daddy's
little lantern-light,
Bending like a finger-tip, and beckoning to you.

Never was so tall a hill for tiny feet to scramble
up,
Never was so strange a world to baffle little eyes,
Half of it as black as ink with ghostly feet to
fall on it,
And half of it all filled with lamps and cheerful
sounds and cries.

Lamps in golden palaces, and station-lamps,
and steamer-lamps,
Very nearly all the lamps that Mother ever knew,
And there among the other lamps is Daddy's
little lantern lamp
Bending like a finger-tip, and beckoning to you.

H. H. Bashford



Fog

This is a very interesting word picture of fog. Read it aloud slowly, thinking the picture in your mind, so that if the others shut their eyes they will see the grey fog creeping over the land.

THE fog comes
on little cat feet.

It sits looking
over harbor and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on.

Carl Sandburg

The Plaint of the Camel

This poor camel seems to think that he has a very hard life indeed. Do you remember the story of "How the Camel Got His Hump" in the "Just-So Stories"? Perhaps the camel deserves some of his ill-luck.

CANARY-BIRDS feed on sugar and seed,
Parrots have crackers to crunch;
And as for the poodles, they tell me the noodles
Have chickens and cream for their lunch.
But there's never a question
About *my* digestion —
Anything does for me!

Cats, you're aware, can repose in a chair,
Chickens can roost upon rails;
Puppies are able to sleep in a stable,
And oysters can slumber in pails.
But no one supposes
A poor Camel dozes —
Any place does for me!

Lambs are enclosed where it's never exposed,
Coops are constructed for hens;

Kittens are treated to houses well heated,
And pigs are protected by pens.
But a Camel comes handy
Wherever it's sandy —
Anywhere does for me!

People would laugh if you rode a giraffe,
Or mounted the back of an ox;
It's nobody's habit to ride on a rabbit,
Or try to bestraddle a fox.
But as for a Camel, he's
Ridden by families —
Any load does for me!

A snake is as round as a hole in the ground,
And weasels are wavy and sleek;
And no alligator could ever be straighter
Than lizards that live in a creek,
But a Camel's all lumpy
And bumpy and humpy —
Any shape does for me!

Charles Edward Carryl

Bartholomew

Have you a little baby brother? See if you can tell in how many ways he is like this baby and in how many ways he is different.

BARTHOLOMEW is very sweet,
From sandy hair to rosy feet.

Bartholomew is six months old,
And dearer far than pearls or gold.

Bartholomew has deep blue eyes,
Round pieces dropped from out the skies.

Bartholomew is hugged and kissed:
He loves a flower in either fist.

Bartholomew's my saucy son:
No mother has a sweeter one!

Norman Gale

The Bells of Heaven

The author of this poem feels very sorry for all animals that are ill-treated or held captive. He thinks that the very angels would rejoice and ring the bells of Heaven if all the poor animals were let out of their cages and allowed to go free, or better still, were never put into cages.

'TWOULD ring the bells of Heaven
The wildest peal for years,
If Parson lost his senses
And people came to theirs,
And he and they together
Knelt down with angry prayers
For tamed and shabby tigers
And dancing dogs and bears,
And wretched, blind pit ponies,
And little hunted hares.

Ralph Hodgson

The Little Turtle

This is a good poem to learn. See if you can learn it by reading it just once.

THERE was a little turtle.
He lived in a box.
He swam in a puddle.
He climbed on the rocks.

He snapped at a mosquito.
He snapped at a flea.
He snapped at a minnow.
And he snapped at me.

He caught the mosquito.
He caught the flea.
He caught the minnow.
But he didn't catch me.

Vachel Lindsay

The Mysterious Cat

This is a "just-for-fun" poem about a proud, mysterious cat. It ought to be chanted almost as if you were singing it. Try to mew like a very proud cat indeed.

I SAW a proud, mysterious cat,
I saw a proud, mysterious cat
Too proud to catch a mouse or rat —
Mew, mew, mew.

But catnip she would eat, and purr,
But catnip she would eat, and purr,
And goldfish she did much prefer —
Mew, mew, mew.

I saw a cat — 'twas but a dream,
I saw a cat — 'twas but a dream
Who scorned the slave that brought her cream —
Mew, mew, mew.

Unless the slave were dressed in style,
Unless the slave were dressed in style
And knelt before her all the while —
Mew, mew, mew.

Did you ever hear of a thing like that?
Did you ever hear of a thing like that?
Did you ever hear of a thing like that?
Oh, what a proud mysterious cat.
Oh, what a proud mysterious cat.
Oh, what a proud mysterious cat.
Mew . . . mew . . . mew.

Vachel Lindsay

The Potatoes' Dance

(A Poem Game)

Don't you want to dance to this poem? You should see Mr. Lindsay, who wrote it, dance as he recites. It is great fun. Can you make your arms and legs look stiff like matches?

I

"DOWN cellar," said the cricket,
"Down cellar," said the cricket,
"Down cellar," said the cricket,
"I saw a ball last night,
In honor of a lady,
In honor of a lady,
In honor of a lady,
Whose wings were pearly white.
The breath of bitter weather,
The breath of bitter weather,
The breath of bitter weather,
Had smashed the cellar pane.
We entertained a drift of leaves,
We entertained a drift of leaves,
We entertained a drift of leaves,
And then of snow and rain.
But we were dressed for winter,

But we were dressed for winter,
But we were dressed for winter,
And loved to hear it blow
In honor of the lady,
In honor of the lady,
In honor of the lady,
Who makes potatoes grow,
Our guest the Irish lady,
The tiny Irish lady,
The airy Irish lady,
Who makes potatoes grow.

II

"Potatoes were the waiters,
Potatoes were the waiters,
Potatoes were the waiters,
Potatoes were the band,
Potatoes were the dancers
Kicking up the sand,
Kicking up the sand,
Kicking up the sand,
Potatoes were the dancers
Kicking up the sand.
Their legs were old burnt matches,
Their legs were old burnt matches,
Their legs were old burnt matches,

Their arms were just the same.
They jigged and whirled and scrambled,
Jigged and whirled and scrambled,
Jigged and whirled and scrambled,
In honor of the dame,
The noble Irish lady
Who makes potatoes dance,

The witty Irish lady,
The saucy Irish lady,
The laughing Irish lady
Who makes potatoes prance.

III

"There was just one sweet potato.
He was golden brown and slim.
The lady loved his dancing,
The lady loved his dancing,
The lady loved his dancing,
She danced all night with him,
She danced all night with him.
Alas, he wasn't Irish.
So when she flew away,
They threw him in the coalbin,
And there he is to-day,
Where they cannot hear his sighs
And his weeping for the lady,
The glorious Irish lady,
The beauteous Irish lady,
Who
Gives
Potatoes
Eyes."

Vachel Lindsay

Animal Crackers

Does your mother ever let you choose just what you will have for supper, for a special treat, perhaps on Sunday evening? I wonder if you would choose what this little boy did. Perhaps you would like something else better.

ANIMAL crackers, and cocoa to drink,
That is the finest of suppers, I think;
When I'm grown up and can have what I please
I think I shall always insist upon these.

What do *you* choose when you're offered a treat?
When Mother says, "What would you like best to eat?"
Is it waffles and syrup, or cinnamon toast?
It's cocoa and animals that *I* love the most!

The kitchen's the cosiest place that I know:
The kettle is singing, the stove is aglow,
And there in the twilight, how jolly to see
The cocoa and animals waiting for me.

Daddy and Mother dine later in state,
With Mary to cook for them, Susan to wait;

But they don't have nearly as much fun as I
Who eat in the kitchen with Nurse standing by;
And Daddy once said he would like to be me
Having cocoa and animals once more for tea!

Christopher Morley

A Bunch of Roses

Did you ever see a baby playing with his own toes and trying to put them into his mouth? It makes the author of this poem think of a bunch of roses.

THE rosy mouth and rosy toe
Of little baby brother
Until about a month ago
Had never met each other;
But nowadays the neighbors sweet,
In every sort of weather,
Half way with rosy fingers meet,
To kiss and play together.

John Bannister Tabb

Check

Did you ever watch the darkness creeping slowly, slowly along the sky and the grass until you almost thought that it was a real person? Perhaps, like this child, you feel more comfortable indoors with a light which the blackness cannot cover. Do you like a candle for light?

THE night was creeping on the ground;
She crept and did not make a sound
Until she reached the tree, and then
She covered it, and stole again
Along the grass beside the wall.

I heard the rustle of her shawl
As she threw blackness everywhere
Upon the sky and ground and air,
And in the room where I was hid:
But no matter what she did
To everything that was without
She could not put my candle out.

So I stared at the night, and she
Stared back solemnly at me.

James Stephens

A Wish Is Quite a Tiny Thing

Here is a very little poem all about wishes. Where do your wishes build their nests?

A WISH is quite a tiny thing
Just like a bird upon the wing,
It flies away all fancy free
And lights upon a house or tree;
It flies across the farthest air,
And builds a safe nest anywhere.

Annette Wynne

Song against Children

Michael and Deborah and Christopher are Mrs. Kilmer's children and I am afraid that they really did what she tells, or tried to at least. Why do you suppose she called the poem a "Song against Children"? Do you think she is really against children or just joking a little?

O THE barberry bright, the barberry bright!
It stood on the mantelpiece because of the height.
Its stems were slender and thorny and tall,

And it looked most beautiful against the grey wall.
But Michael climbed up there in spite of the height,
And he ate all the berries off the barberry bright.

O the round holly wreath, the round holly wreath!
It hung in the window with ivy beneath.
It was plump and prosperous, spangled with red;
And I thought it would cheer me although I were dead.

But Deborah climbed on the table beneath,
And she ate all the berries off the round holly wreath.

O the mistletoe bough, the mistletoe bough!
Could anyone touch it? I did not see how.
I hung it up high that it might last long,
I wreathed it with ribbons and hailed it with song.
But Christopher reached it, I do not know how,
And he ate all the berries off the mistletoe bough.

Aline Kilmer

A Christmas Folk Song

Shepherds and their quiet flocks seem always to lead a peaceful life. Perhaps they have received a special blessing because they welcomed the little Lord Jesus when he came to this earth and no one was ready to take him in. This poem is written to sound like an old English song.

THE little Jesus came to town;
The wind blew up, the wind blew down;
Out in the street the wind was bold;
Now who would house Him from the cold?

Then opened wide the stable door,
Fair were the rushes on the floor;
The Ox put forth a hornéd head:
"Come, little Lord, here make Thy bed."

Up rose the Sheep were folded near;
"Thou Lamb of God, come, enter here."
He entered there to rush and reed,
Who was the Lamb of God indeed.

The little Jesus came to town;
With ox and sheep He laid Him down;
Peace to the byre, peace to the fold,
For that they housed Him from the cold!

Lizette Woodworth Reese

The Coin

When you put money into a bank it is not always safe. You may have to spend it or robbers may steal it, but the coins which we put into our "heart's treasury" are safe forever. The memories of beautiful music, lovely poems, and wonderful pictures are coins of this kind. Can you think of others besides these?

INTO my heart's treasury
I slipped a coin
That time cannot take
Nor thief purloin, —
Oh, better than the minting
Of a gold-crowned king
Is the safe-kept memory
Of a lovely thing.

Sara Teasdale

Paper Boats

A little boy far away in India is telling you in this poem how he plays with paper boats. This would look more like poetry if we could see it written in his own language. Isn't it strange that in that distant land he plays games very like those that you play? People are really a good deal alike no matter where they live.

DAY by day I float my paper boats one by one down the running stream.
In big black letters I write my name on them and the name of the village where I live.
I hope that someone in some strange land will find them and know who I am.
I load my little boats with *shiuli* flowers from our garden, and hope that these blooms of dawn will be carried safely to land in the night.
I launch my paper boats and look up into the sky and see the little clouds setting their white bulging sails.
I know not what playmate of mine in the sky sends them down the air to race with my boats!

When night comes I bury my face in my arms and dream that my paper boats float on and on under the midnight stars.

The fairies of sleep are sailing in them, and the lading is their baskets full of dreams.

Rabindranath Tagore

PART TWO

AND CHILDREN'S FACES LOOKING UP

Barter

Barter means "trade" or "exchange." Do you suppose that Old Scrooge in "The Christmas Carol" could have exchanged one of his gold pieces for any of the lovely things this poem tells us about? There are things to see and hear and feel and smell, but the joy they bring cannot be bought for money. Can you think of any bits of "loveliness" that Miss Teasdale has left out?

LIFE has loveliness to sell,
All beautiful and splendid things,
Blue waves whitened on a cliff,
Soaring fire that sways and sings,
And children's faces looking up
Holding wonder like a cup.

Life has loveliness to sell,
Music like a curve of gold,
Scent of pine trees in the rain,
Eyes that love you, arms that hold,
And for your spirit's still delight,
Holy thoughts that star the night.

Spend all you have for loveliness,
  Buy it and never count the cost;
For one white singing hour of peace
  Count many a year of strife well lost,
And for a breath of ecstasy
Give all you have been, or could be.

Sara Teasdale

Stupidity Street

In this country we do not eat singing birds, but in some countries it is no uncommon sight to see them for sale in the markets. What do the birds do for us besides giving us music and beauty to look at? Why was there nothing for sale in Stupidity Street? Find, on page 52, another poem by this author. What is he trying to tell people in both these poems?

I SAW with open eyes
  Singing birds sweet
Sold in the shops
For the people to eat,
Sold in the shops of
Stupidity Street.

I saw in vision
The worm in the wheat,
And in the shops nothing
For people to eat;
Nothing for sale in
Stupidity Street.

Ralph Hodgson

After All and After All

Have you ever, when you were washing dishes or helping Mother in other ways, wished that there were fairy godmothers to-day to make one's dreams come true? Perhaps you have thought, like this little girl, that "after all and after all" there might be something pleasant just around the corner, even without a fairy godmother to help make it come true.

DREAMING of a prince
Cinderella sat among the ashes long ago;
Dreaming of a prince,
She scoured the pots and kettles till they shone;
and so,
After all and after all,

DREAMING OF A PRINCE

Gaily at the castle ball
Cinderella met her prince long and long ago.

Dreaming of a prince,
Sleeping Beauty lay in happy slumber, white and still;
Dreaming of a prince,
She waited for a hundred years and then his bugles shrill,
After all and after all,
Woke the castle, bower, and hall,
And he found her waiting for him long and long ago.

Dreaming of a prince
I polish bowl and teapot and the spoons, each one;
Dreaming of a prince,
I hang the new-washed clothes to wave a-drying in the sun;
After all and after all,
Great adventures may befall
Like to those that happened once long and long ago.

Mary Carolyn Davies

Ellis Park

People who toil all day in hot factories or offices like to have something fresh and green to think of while they work. In large cities, some people never see a patch of green any larger than the little "Ellis Park" in this poem. Does it remind you of any place that you have seen? When you see a lovely place do you too "carry off a piece" in your mind?

LITTLE park that I pass through,
I carry off a piece of you
Every morning hurrying down
To my work-day in the town;
Carry you for country there
To make the city ways more fair.
I take your trees,
And your breeze,
Your greenness,
Your cleanness,
Some of your shade, some of your sky,
Some of your calm as I go by;
Your flowers to trim
The pavements grim;
Your space for room in the jostled street
And grass for carpet to my feet.

Your fountains take and sweet bird calls
To sing me from my office walls.

All that I can see
I carry off with me.
But you never miss my theft,
So much treasure you have left.
As I find you, fresh at morning,
So I find you, home returning —
Nothing lacking from your grace.
All your riches wait in place
For me to borrow
On the morrow.

Do you hear this praise of you,
Little park that I pass through?

Helen Hoyt

The Spirit of the Birch

Dryads are beautiful fairy maidens who are supposed to live in trees. Here is the story of the one who is imprisoned in the birch tree.

I AM the dancer of the wood —
I shimmer in the solitude;

Men call me Birch Tree, yet I know
In other days it was not so.
I am a Dryad slim and white
Who danced too long one summer night,
And the Dawn found and prisoned me!
Captive I moan my liberty.
But let the wood wind flutes begin
Their elfin music, faint and thin,

I sway, I bend, retreat, advance,
And evermore—I dance! I dance!

Arthur Ketchum

A Tree at Dusk

This is a poem to read under a tree just when the light is fading. Watch for the Moon Child—it is easy to see her but you must be very, very still to hear her "delicate soft laughter."

WITH secrets in their eyes, the blue-winged Hours
Rustle through the meadow
Dropping shadow.

Yawning among red flowers,
The Moon Child with her golden hoop
And a pink star drifting after,
Leans to me where I droop.

I hear her delicate, soft laughter,
And through my hair her tiny fingers creep. . . .

I shall sleep.

Winifred Welles

Who Loves the Rain

There are a great many kinds of people in the world and luckily they do not all like the same things. Some people enjoy stormy weather and others like the quiet rainy days when one may stay indoors and read or play. We all like the kind of person in this poem who is not frightened or excited in time of trouble, a quiet, home-loving person whom neither "hell nor heaven" can surprise.

WHO loves the rain
And loves his home,
And looks on life with quiet eyes,
Him will I follow through the storm;
And at his hearth-fire keep me warm;
Nor hell nor heaven shall that soul surprise,
Who loves the rain,
And loves his home,
And looks on life with quiet eyes.

Frances Shaw

Velvet Shoes

What fun it is to walk quietly in new snow. Read this poem very softly and see if you can make it sound like walking in velvet shoes. What are the "veils of white lace"? Did you ever wear a veil of this kind?

LET us walk in the white snow
In a soundless space;
With footsteps quiet and slow,
At a tranquil pace,
Under veils of white lace.

I shall go shod in silk,
And you in wool,
White as a white cow's milk,
More beautiful
Than the breast of a gull.

We shall walk through the still town
In a windless peace;
We shall step upon white down,
Upon silver fleece,
Upon softer than these.

We shall walk in velvet shoes:
  Wherever we go
Silence will fall like dews
  On white silence below.
  We shall walk in the snow.

Elinor Wylie

The Lake Isle of Innisfree

This exquisite poem tells about a man who remembers in his heart the beautiful home of his youth and dreams always of going there to spend his declining years. When you read this poem aloud, notice how many times the soft "l" sound is repeated and what a peaceful, dreamy effect it gives. Where is the "Lake Isle" supposed to be?

I WILL arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
  And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;
Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honey bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,

Dropping from the veils of the morning to where
the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a pur-
ple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the
shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pave-
ment grey,
I hear it in the heart's deep core.

William Butler Yeats

Do You Fear the Wind?

This is a good poem for Boy Scouts. Hamlin Garland seems to think that we are growing lazy and "soft"—afraid of a little rough weather.

DO you fear the force of the wind,
The slash of the rain?
Go face them and fight them,
Be savage again.
Go hungry and cold like the wolf,
Go wade like the crane:

The palms of your hands will thicken,
The skin of your cheek will tan,
You'll grow ragged and weary and swarthy,
But you'll walk like a man!

Hamlin Garland

A Chant Out of Doors

This is another good "Scout Poem." It would be a fine one to recite while sitting round the campfire just before "Taps." It should be chanted rather slowly.

GOD of grave nights,
God of brave mornings,
God of silent noon,
Hear my salutation!

For where the rapids rage white and scornful,
I have passed safely, filled with wonder;
Where the sweet pools dream under willows,
I have been swimming, filled with life.

God of round hills,
God of green valleys,
God of clear springs,
Hear my salutation!

For where the moose feeds, I have eaten berries,
Where the moose drinks, I have drunk deep.
When the storms crash through broken heav-
ens —
And under clear skies — I have known joy.

God of great trees,
God of wild grasses,
God of little flowers,
Hear my salutation!

For where the deer crops and the beaver
plunges,
Near the river I have pitched my tent;
Where the pines cast aromatic needles
On a still floor, I have known peace.

God of grave nights,
God of brave mornings,
God of silent noon,
Hear my salutation.

Marguerite Wilkinson

The Army of the Sidhe

Perhaps you think that this does not look like a poem because the lines are so long and there is no rhyme, but if you read it aloud you will find that the words have a lovely sound. The Sidhe (you should pronounce it just like "she") were a fairy folk who lived in Ireland long and long ago. This poem paints beautiful word pictures of their warriors.

LAEGAIRE, son of the king of Connacht, was out one day with the king his father near Loch na-n Ean, the Lake of Birds, and the men of

Connacht with them, and they saw a man coming to them through the mist. Long golden-yellow hair he had, and at his belt a gold-hilted sword, and in his hand two five-barbed darts; a gold-rimmed shield on his back, a five-folded crimson cloak about his shoulders, and it is what he said:

The most beautiful of plains is the Plain of the Two Mists; it is not far from this; the men of its army in good order go out ahead of their beautiful king; they march among blue spears, white troops of fighters with curled hair.

They scatter the troops of their enemies, they destroy every country they make an attack on; they are beautiful in battle, a host with high looks, rushing, avenging.

It is no wonder they to have such strength; every one of them is the son of a king and a queen; manes of hair they have of the colour of gold.

Their bodies smooth and comely; their eyes blue and far-seeing; their teeth bright like crystal within their thin red lips.

White shields they have in their hands, with patterns on them of white silver; blue shining

swords, red horns set with gold. They are good at killing men in battle; good at song-making; good at chess-playing.

The most beautiful of plains is the Plain of the Two Mists; it is not far from this place.

Lady Gregory

The Good Joan

Joan of Arc, or Jeanne d'Arc as she is called in France, was a holy maid who, dressed in shining armor and riding a white charger, led the French armies in an old war. During the World War, the French people used to think that her spirit came back and rode up and down the land, cheering and encouraging the soldiers.

ALONG the thousand roads of France,
Now there, now here, swift as a glance,
A cloud, a mist blown down the sky,
Good Joan of Arc goes riding by.

In Domremy at candlelight,
The orchards blowing rose and white
About the shadowy houses lie;
And Joan of Arc goes riding by.

On Avignon there falls a hush,
Brief as the singing of a thrush
Across old gardens April-high;
And Joan of Arc goes riding by.

The women bring the apples in,
Round Arles when the long gusts begin,
Then sit them down to sob and cry;
And Joan of Arc goes riding by.

Dim fall the hoofs down old Calais;
In Tours a flash of silver-gray,

Like flaw of rain in a clear sky;
And Joan of Arc goes riding by.

Who saith that ancient France shall fail,
A rotting leaf driv'n down the gale?
Then her sons know not how to die;
Then good God dwells no more on high!

Tours, Arles, and Domremy reply!
For Joan of Arc goes riding by.

Lizette Woodworth Reese

In Flanders Fields

The soldiers who fought in the World War did so to make the world so safe that there would be no more wars. They want us to carry on the torch of service which they, perhaps, can no longer hold, and to work for universal brotherhood. There were so many poppies in France and Flanders that they became a symbolic flower. The poppy is now the emblem of the American Legion.

IN Flanders fields the poppies blow
Between the crosses, row on row,
That mark our place; and in the sky

The larks, still bravely singing, fly
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the dead. Short days ago
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,
Loved and were loved, and now we lie
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:
To you from failing hands we throw
The torch; be yours to hold it high.
If ye break faith with us who die
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow
In Flanders fields.

John McCrae

Cargoes

Look at a picture of the old Roman quinquiremes—boats with five banks of oars manned by galley slaves—or of a "stately Spanish galleon" with its carved prow and many sails; then compare them with the dirty, smoky little coasting steamers that we see in our modern harbors. What would you expect the cargoes of the different ships to be like?

John Masefield tells us a little about them in this poem, which makes us think of pirates and princesses and voyages of adventure.

QUINQUIREME of Nineveh from distant Ophir
Rowing home to haven in sunny Palestine,
With a cargo of ivory,
And apes and peacocks,
Sandalwood, cedarwood, and sweet white wine.

Stately Spanish galleon coming from the Isthmus,
Dipping through the Tropics by the palm-green shores,
With a cargo of diamonds,
Emeralds, amethysts,
Topazes, and cinnamon, and gold moidores.

Dirty British coaster with a salt-caked smoke-stack,
Butting through the Channel in the mad March days,
With a cargo of Tyne coal,
Road-rails, pig-lead,
Firewood, iron-ware, and cheap tin trays.

John Masefield

Tartary

Have you ever played that you were a great king with a beautiful palace and trains of servants? What would you do if you were Lord of Tartary? Do you think you would ever get tired of it and wish you were a little boy or girl again?

IF I were Lord of Tartary,
Myself and me alone,
My bed should be of ivory,
Of beaten gold my throne;
And in my court should peacocks flaunt,
And in my forests tigers haunt,
And in my pools great fishes slant
Their fins athwart the sun.

If I were Lord of Tartary,
Trumpeters every day
To every meal should summon me,
And in my courtyard bray;
And in the evening lamps would shine,
Yellow as honey, red as wine,
While harp, and flute, and mandoline,
Made music sweet and gay.

If I were Lord of Tartary,
I'd wear a robe of beads,
White, and gold, and green they'd be —
And clustered thick as seeds;

And ere should wane the morning star,
I'd don my robe and scimitar,
And zebras seven should draw my car
Through Tartary's dark glades.

Lord of the fruits of Tartary,
Her rivers silver-pale!
Lord of the hills of Tartary,
Glen, thicket, wood, and dale!
Her flashing stars, her scented breeze,
Her trembling lakes, like foamless seas,
Her bird-delighting citron-trees
In every purple vale!

Walter de la Mare

Sea-Fever

The man who wrote this poem has gone "down to the sea in ships" himself many a time, and he knows every motion of the boat. There are some very lovely lines here, just like music. Can you find one that tells of the sea at dawn — at night — on a windy day?

I MUST go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,

And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by,
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking,
And a grey mist on the sea's face and a grey dawn breaking.

I must go down to the seas again, for the call of the running tide
Is a wild call and a clear call that may not be denied;
And all I ask is a windy day with the white clouds flying,
And the flung spray and the blown spume, and the sea-gulls crying.

I must go down to the seas again to the vagrant gypsy life,
To the gull's way and the whale's way where the wind's like a whetted knife;
And all I ask is a merry yarn from a laughing fellow-rover,
And quiet sleep and a sweet dream when the long trick's over.

John Masefield

A Song of Sherwood

Sherwood Forest in far-away England is the place where lived bold Robin Hood. If you should walk in Sherwood, do you think you could shut your eyes and hear the fairy horns — see the ghosts of Robin and his merry men as the poet did?

SHERWOOD in the twilight, is Robin Hood awake?
Grey and ghostly shadows are gliding through the brake,
Shadows of the dappled deer, dreaming of the morn,
Dreaming of a shadowy man that winds a shadowy horn.

Robin Hood is here again; all his merry thieves
Hear a ghostly bugle-note shivering through the leaves,
Calling as he used to call, faint and far away,
In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.

Merry, merry England has kissed the lips of June;

All the wings of fairyland were here beneath the moon,
Like a flight of rose-leaves fluttering in a mist
Of opal and ruby and pearl and amethyst.

Merry, merry England is waking as of old,
With eyes of blither hazel and hair of brighter gold;
For Robin Hood is here again beneath the bursting spray
In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.

Love is in the greenwood building him a house
Of wild rose and hawthorn and honeysuckle boughs;
Love is in the greenwood, dawn is in the skies,
And Marian is waiting with a glory in her eyes.

Hark! The dazzled laverock climbs the golden steep!
Marian is waiting; is Robin Hood asleep?
Round the fairy grass-rings frolic elf and fay,
In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.

Oberon, Oberon, rake away the gold,
Rake away the red leaves, roll away the mould,
Rake away the gold leaves, roll away the red,
And wake Will Scarlett from his leafy forest bed.

Friar Tuck and Little John are riding down together
With quarter-staff and drinking-can and grey goose feather.

The dead are coming back again, the years are rolled away
In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day.

Softly over Sherwood the south wind blows.
All the heart of England hid in every rose
Hears across the greenwood the sunny whisper leap,
Sherwood in the red dawn, is Robin Hood asleep?

Hark, the voice of England wakes him as of old
And, shattering the silence with a cry of brighter gold,
Bugles in the greenwood echo from the steep,
Sherwood in the red dawn, is Robin Hood asleep?

Where the deer are gliding down the shadowy glen
All across the glades of fern he calls his merry men —
Doublets of the Lincoln green glancing through the May
In Sherwood, in Sherwood, about the break of day —

Calls them and they answer; from aisles of oak
and ash
Rings the *Follow! Follow!* and the boughs be-
gin to crash,
The ferns begin to flutter and the flowers begin
to fly,
And through the crimson dawning the robber
band goes by.

Robin! Robin! Robin! All his merry thieves
Answer as the bugle-note shivers through the leaves,
Calling as he used to call, faint and far away,
In Sherwood, in Sherwood about the break of day.

Alfred Noyes

America for Me

We all love our country, but we never know how much until we leave it for a time. Dr. van Dyke tells us how it feels to be coming home again after a long absence.

'TIS fine to see the Old World, and travel up and down
Among the famous palaces and cities of renown,
To admire the crumbly castles and the statues of the kings, —
But now I think I've had enough of antiquated things.

So it's home again, and home again, America for me!
My heart is turning home again, and there I long to be,
In the land of youth and freedom beyond the ocean bars,
Where the air is full of sunlight and the flag is full of stars.

Oh, London is a man's town, there's power in the air;
And Paris is a woman's town, with flowers in her hair;
And it's sweet to dream in Venice, and it's great to study Rome;
But when it comes to living there is no place like home.

I like the German fir-woods, in green battalions drilled;
I like the gardens of Versailles with flashing fountains filled;
But, oh, to take your hand, my dear, and ramble for a day
In the friendly western woodland where Nature has her way!

I know that Europe's wonderful, yet something seems to lack:
The Past is too much with her, and the people looking back.
But the glory of the Present is to make the Future free, —
We love our land for what she is and what she is to be.

Oh, it's home again, and home again, America for me!
I want a ship that's westward bound to plough the rolling sea,
To the blessed Land of Room Enough beyond the ocean bars,
Where the air is full of sunlight and the flag is full of stars.

Henry van Dyke

Lincoln

Look at a picture of Lincoln and think a little about his character. Then consider what a remarkable word-picture this poem paints. What was the "mad stray bolt from the zenith" that struck down our great President?

LIKE a gaunt, scraggly pine
Which lifts its head above the mournful sandhills;
And patiently, through dull years of bitter silence,
Untended and uncared for, starts to grow.

Ungainly, laboring, huge,
The wind of the north has twisted and gnarled its branches;
Yet in the heat of mid-summer days, when thunder clouds ring the horizon,
A nation of men shall rest beneath its shade.

And it shall protect them all,
Hold everyone safe there, watching aloof in silence;

Until at last, one mad stray bolt from the zenith
Shall strike it in an instant down to earth.

John Gould Fletcher

The Vinegar Man

Sometimes children are very cruel to people who are old and poor and a little queer. They make up rhymes to tease them and forget, I am afraid, that they should be kind and courteous to old people. What kind of person do you think the Vinegar Man was when he was young? Do you think the children were sorry when they saw the Valentine?

THE crazy old Vinegar Man is dead! He never had missed a day before!
Somebody went to his tumble-down shed by the Haunted House and forced the door.
There in the litter of his pungent pans, the murky mess of his mixing place —
Deep, sticky spiders and empty cans — with the same old frown on his sour old face.

"Vinegar – Vinegar – Vinegar Man!
Face – us – and – chase – us – and – catch – if – you – can!

Pepper for a tongue! Pickle for a nose!
Stick a pin in him and vinegar flows!
Glare – at – us – swear – at – us – catch – if – you – can!
Ketchup – and – chow – chow – and –Vinegar – Man!"

Nothing but recipes and worthless junk; greasy old records of paid and due;
But down in the depths of a battered trunk, a queer, quaint valentine torn in two —
Red hearts and arrows and silver lace, and a prim, dim, ladylike script that said —
(Oh, Vinegar Man, with the sour old face!) — "With dearest love, from Ellen to Ned!"

"Steel – us – and – peel – us – and – drown – us – in – brine!
He pickles his heart in" — *a valentine!*
"Vinegar for blood! Pepper for his tongue!
Stick a pin in him and —" *once he was young!*
"Glare – at – us – swear – at – us – catch – if – you – can!" –
"With dearest love" — *to the Vinegar Man!*

Dingy little books of profit and loss (died about
Saturday, so they say),
And a queer, quaint valentine torn across . . .
torn, but it never was thrown away!
"With dearest love from Ellen to Ned" — "Old
Pepper Tongue! Pickles his heart in brine!"
The Vinegar Man is a long time dead: he died
when he tore his valentine.

Ruth Comfort Mitchell

Portrait by a Neighbor

After reading this whimsical bit of description, what is your opinion of the "Neighbor"? Don't you think the author really likes her? Think of some words which describe this person. Tell why you would or would not like to live near her. It is just possible that this is some neighbor's description of the author herself. What do you think?

BEFORE she has her floor swept
Or her dishes done,
Any day you'll find her
A-sunning in the sun!

It's long after midnight
  Her key's in the lock,
And you never see her chimney smoke
  Till past ten o'clock!

She digs in her garden
  With a shovel and a spoon,
She weeds her lazy lettuce
  By the light of the moon,

She walks up the walk
  Like a woman in a dream,
She forgets she borrowed butter
  And pays you back cream!

Her lawn looks like a meadow,
And if she mows the place
She leaves the clover standing
And the Queen Anne's lace!

Edna St. Vincent Millay

I Never Saw a Moor

Some people think that there is no such place as Heaven because we have never seen it. Emily Dickinson, who wrote this poem, thinks that is rather a foolish argument because there are ever so many other things which we have not seen and still we believe in them.

I NEVER saw a moor,
I never saw the sea;
Yet know I how the heather looks,
And what a wave must be.

I never spoke with God,
Nor visited in heaven;
Yet certain am I of the spot
As if the chart were given.

Emily Dickinson

A Little Song of Life

Here are some things for which we should remember to give thanks every day. Can you think of others? How can we grow nearer the sky?

GLAD that I live am I;
That the sky is blue;
Glad for the country lanes,
And the fall of dew.

After the sun the rain,
After the rain the sun;
This is the way of life,
Till the work be done.

All that we need to do,
Be we low or high,
Is to see that we grow
Nearer the sky.

Lizette Woodworth Reese

Days

We all have our ups and downs, our golden days and our grey days. Don't you think that this poem expresses it beautifully? The last line is an especially "shining" one.

SOME days my thoughts are just cocoons —
all cold, and dull, and blind,
They hang from dripping branches in the grey
woods of my mind;

And other days they drift and shine — such free
and flying things!
I find the gold-dust in my hair, left by their
brushing wings.

Karle Wilson Baker

The House with Nobody in It

Have you ever passed an empty house and wondered who had lived in it or who was going to move in? Could you tell what kind of people had lived in the house — careful people or untidy people — children or grown-ups? There is one especially lovely stanza in this poem. Can you find it?

WHENEVER I walk to Suffern along the Erie track
I go by a poor old farmhouse with its shingles broken and black.
I suppose I've passed it a hundred times, but I always stop for a minute
And look at the house, the tragic house, the house with nobody in it.

I never have seen a haunted house, but I hear there are such things;
That they hold the talk of spirits, their mirth and sorrowings.
I know this house isn't haunted, and I wish it were, I do;
For it wouldn't be so lonely if it had a ghost or two.

This house on the road to Suffern needs a dozen
panes of glass,
And somebody ought to weed the walk and take
a scythe to the grass.
It needs new paint and shingles, and the vines
should be trimmed and tied;
But what it needs the most of all is some people
living inside.

If I had a lot of money and all my debts were
paid
I'd put a gang of men to work with brush and
saw and spade.
I'd buy that place and fix it up the way it used
to be
And I'd find some people who wanted a home
and give it to them free.

Now, a new house standing empty, with staring
window and door,
Looks idle, perhaps, and foolish, like a hat on
its block in the store.
But there's nothing mournful about it; it cannot
be sad and lone
For the lack of something within it that it has
never known.

But a house that has done what a house should
do, a house that has sheltered life,
That has put its loving wooden arms around a
man and his wife,
A house that has echoed a baby's laugh and held
up his stumbling feet,
Is the saddest sight, when it's left alone, that
ever your eyes could meet.

So whenever I go to Suffern along the Erie track
I never go by the empty house without stopping
and looking back,
Yet it hurts me to look at the crumbling roof
and the shutters fallen apart,
For I can't help thinking the poor old house is a
house with a broken heart.

Joyce Kilmer

An Old Woman of the Roads

If you were old and poor and had to wander about the roads begging your way, with no place at all to lay your head, what would you want most of all? There are many such old women in Ireland, and one of them is speaking in this poem. Which stanza makes you feel cold and lonesome? Which stanza makes a cozy, comfortable picture? Can you pick out some of the words which help to make these pictures?

O TO have a little house!
To own the hearth and stool and all!
The heaped up sods upon the fire,
The pile of turf against the wall!

To have a clock with weights and chains
And pendulum swinging up and down!
A dresser filled with shining delph,
Speckled and white and blue and brown!

I could be busy all the day
Clearing and sweeping hearth and floor,
And fixing on their shelf again
My white and blue and speckled store!

I could be quiet there at night
Beside the fire and by myself,
Sure of a bed and loth to leave
The ticking clock and the shining delph!

Och! but I'm weary of mist and dark,
And roads where there's never a house nor bush,

And tired I am of bog and road,
And the crying wind and the lonesome hush!

And I am praying to God on high,
And I am praying Him night and day,
For a little house — a house of my own —
Out of the wind's and the rain's way.

Padraic Colum

He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven

Listen to this colorful poem and try to think how the different cloths look. With what are they embroidered? Wouldn't they make a lovely gift for one whom you love?

HAD I the heavens' embroidered cloths,
Enwrought with golden and silver light,
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
Of night and light and the half light,
I would spread the cloths under your feet:
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet;
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

William Butler Yeats

Grace for Light

Nearly every child knows a little prayer to say before and after eating, but who ever heard of a grace for light? The children in this tiny, far-away Irish house seem to have behaved much as you do when you are getting ready for bed. Do you know who are meant by She and Herself and Himself? Have we more reason to say the grace for light than these people had?

WHEN we were little childer we had a quare wee house,
Away up in the heather by the head o' Brabla' Burn;
The hares we'd see them scootin', an' we'd hear the crowin' grouse,
An' when we'd all be in at night ye'd not get room to turn.

The youngest two She'd put to bed, their faces to the wall,
An' the lave of us could sit aroun', just anywhere we might;
Herself 'ud take the rush-dip an' light it for us all,

An' "*God be thanked!*" she would say, — "*now we have a light.*"

Then we be to quet the laughin' an' pushin' on the floor,
An' think on One who called us to come and be forgiven;
Himself 'ud put his pipe down, an' say the good word more,
"*May the Lamb o' God lead us all to the Light o' Heaven!*"

There's a wheen things that used to be an' now
has had their day,
The nine Glens of Antrim can show ye many
a sight;
But not the quare wee house where we lived up
Brabla' way,
Nor a child in all the nine Glens that knows
the grace for light.

Moira O'Neill

The Song of Wandering Aengus

Do you remember the Song of Conn the Fool? Wandering Aengus is another just such person. He too would pluck the "silver apples of the moon." How he would like Conn's moon tree!

I WENT out to the hazel wood,
Because a fire was in my head,
And cut and peeled a hazel wand,
And hooked a berry to a thread;
And when white moths were on the wing,
And moth-like stars were flickering out,
I dropped the berry in a stream
And caught a little silver trout.

When I had laid it on the floor
I went to blow the fire a-flame,
But something rustled on the floor,
And some one called me by my name;
It had become a glimmering girl
With apple blossom in her hair
Who called me by my name and ran
And faded through the brightening air.

Though I am old with wandering
Through hollow lands and hilly lands,
I will find out where she has gone,
And kiss her lips and take her hands;
And walk among long dappled grass,
And pluck till time and times are done,
The silver apples of the moon,
The golden apples of the sun.

William Butler Yeats

Lone Dog

Do you know any people like the "Lone Dog" — people who are cross and ill-tempered, who never want to play the games the others want and like to sulk in corners? No one likes such persons very well. Notice the interesting rhyming pattern in this poem.

I'M a lean dog, a keen dog, a wild dog, and lone;
I'm a rough dog, a tough dog, hunting on my own;
I'm a bad dog, a mad dog, teasing silly sheep;
I love to sit and bay the moon, to keep fat souls from sleep.

I'll never be a lap dog, licking dirty feet,
A sleek dog, a meek dog, cringing for my meat,
Not for me the fireside, the well-filled plate,
But shut door, and sharp stone, and cuff and kick and hate.

Not for me the other dogs, running by my side,
Some have run a short while, but none of them would bide.
O mine is still the lone trail, the hard trail, the best,
Wide wind, and wild stars, and hunger of the quest!

Irene Rutherford McLeod

Work

The greatest blessing in the world is work. There is nothing much more difficult than to sit still and do nothing. Sometimes we are inclined to forget all this and complain because we have work to do. This poem should help to make us more cheerful and contented.

LET me but do my work from day to day,
In field or forest, at the desk or loom,
In roaring market-place or tranquil room;
Let me but find it in my heart to say,
When vagrant wishes beckon me astray,
"This is my work; my blessing, not my doom;
Of all who live, I am the one by whom
This work can best be done in the right way."

Then shall I see it not too great, nor small,
To suit my spirit and to prove my powers;
Then shall I cheerful greet the labouring hours,
And cheerful turn, when the long shadows fall
At eventide, to play and love and rest,
Because I know for me my work is best.

Henry van Dyke

Souls

It is not always the people who wear the most beautiful clothes who are beautiful within. What are you giving your soul to wear — "holy thoughts that star the night," and the "safe-kept memory" of lovely things such as Miss Teasdale told us about; or do you give it only ugly things to wear? And do you remember, when you are trying to keep your thoughts fine and kind, that other people are trying too? This poem is full of sound words and color words and movement words. It is like a painting by Maxfield Parrish. Do you know his pictures when you see them?

MY Soul goes clad in gorgeous things,
Scarlet and gold and blue,
And at her shoulder sudden wings
Like long flames flicker through.

And she is swallow-fleet, and free
From mortal bonds and bars.
She laughs, because Eternity
Blossoms for her with stars!

O folk who scorn my stiff gray gown,
My dull and foolish face,
Can ye not see my Soul flash down,
A singing flame through space?

And folk, whose earth-stained looks I hate,
Why may I not divine
Your Souls, that must be passionate,
Shining, and swift as mine?

Fannie Stearns Davis

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